Olga Yashchuk
National Technical University of Ukraine 'KPI'

Language teaching: pains and gains

'Every student is different and therefore learns differently'. That statement might not sound very revolutionary but if you look into many classrooms today, it seems that nobody has heard this statement before. Recently, there has been a trend in language teaching to encourage students to take more responsibility for their own learning. But the problem is most of our teachers have got used to directing learning process. They are organizers and mentors of this process, whereas the students are executants of their will. Thus, the latter have only obligations: 1. To attend the lessons (No comments!); 2. To do a number of exercises (For what purpose? The teachers don't often ask such a question to themselves. So, the students don't understand why they have to do them either.); 3. To do their homework (What for? The students quite often ask such a question to themselves. That's why they normally don't do it. 'What for?' they say, 'The teacher sometimes forgets or doesn't have enough time to check it'); 4. So, when half of the group is not ready for the lesson, the teacher doesn't know what to do within 45 min or 1 h 20 (which is worse).

If you want your students to be always ready for the lesson, it's necessary to change something – maybe your teaching style or learning strategies.

So what can be done to try and overcome the drawbacks in teaching while at the same time getting the most out of students' language learning capacity?

Here are some suggestions and steps that can be of help to teachers and will be beneficial to you and your students: 1) learning is more important than teaching; 2) do not emphasize difficulties (errors are viewed as learning steps); 3) show your reaction to what students say (what to say is more important than how to say); 4) avoid prolonged empty spaces during the class (the moment continuity of a class is broken, discipline problems are more likely to arise; so every teacher's 'bag of tricks should include a variety of short activities that can be used when learners finish doing an activity sooner than expected); 5) use communicative method in teaching (it means that communicative competence is the desirable goal and teachers help learners in any way that motivates them to work with the language); 6) encourage students to use language (students should have a real need to communicate, so create different communicative situations in which learners are expected to interact with other people in pair or group work). Therefore, take advantage of the above ideas and the gains will be much more than the pains.